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Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)

Letter dated 21 January 2009 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with instructions received from the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, I have the honour to refer to the letter dated 3 January 2009 from the Deputy Permanent Representative of Argentina addressed to you (A/63/671), transmitting in an annex the text of a press release issued on 3 January 2009 by the Government of Argentina on the question of the Falkland Islands.

The Government of the United Kingdom has no doubt about the sovereignty of the United Kingdom over the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and their surrounding maritime areas, and rejects the claims by the Government of Argentina to sovereignty over those islands and maritime areas and that the Falkland Islands are under illegal occupation by the United Kingdom.

The principle of self-determination, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, underlies our position on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands. There can be no negotiation on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands unless and until such time as the Falkland Islanders so wish. The Islanders regularly make it clear that they wish the Falkland Islands to remain under British sovereignty. The right of the people of the Falkland Islands to determine their political future was freely exercised throughout the negotiation of the new Falkland Islands Constitution, which came into force on 1 January 2009.

The United Kingdom firmly rejects the assertion that the new Falkland Islands Constitution shows disregard for any General Assembly resolution or that it violates, either in practice or in spirit, any aspect of the joint statements by the United Kingdom and Argentina. The formula on sovereignty agreed by both Governments as part of the joint statements was intended to enable the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and Argentina, while protecting both countries' positions on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, and thereafter to enable practical cooperation in the South Atlantic and to facilitate confidence-building. The joint statements make no reference to negotiations on sovereignty. The



United Kingdom rebutted the Argentine protest to which the Argentine press release refers on 18 November.

The United Kingdom continues to believe that there are many opportunities for cooperation in the South Atlantic under the sovereignty formula which would be of mutual benefit. The United Kingdom has made a number of proposals in this respect in recent years and remains keen to foster a constructive relationship with Argentina and to promote practical cooperation in the South Atlantic.

I should be grateful if you would circulate the text of the present letter as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 23.

(Signed) John Sawers
